
ABROAD

BRASILIA

Testing Time

President José Sarney, who succeeded the popular Tancredo Neves when the latter died in April, having barely assumed office, has weathered his first public tests and appears to be solidly in command. It is true that most Brazilian politicians have bent over backward not to disturb the transition of power following Neves's fatal illness. But now a public-opinion poll shows that 51 per cent of Brazilians think Sarney is doing well. Fewer than 5 per cent think he has done poorly. The situation, however, has increased the pressure for Brazilian heads of government to be elected by direct popular vote (Neves and Sarney were chosen by a college of electors). A new constitution would be necessary to bring this about, and jockeying for its formulation has already begun. The army is said to be against the introduction of direct popular elections next year because such an early return to the polls might denote instability. This question of constitutional change looks like becoming the meat of the new government's first major crisis.

MOSCOW

Having It All

There seems little doubt that Communist Party leader Mikhail Gorbachev will assume the presidency of the Soviet Union when the Supreme Soviet meets in July. He would succeed President Chernenko, who died earlier this year. It was Gorbachev himself who nominated Chernenko for the office in 1984, and at that time he referred to the desirability of the same man's holding both the Party leadership and the presidency, especially when it came to the conduct of foreign affairs.

OSLO

Danger in the Arctic

Norway's strategic position as the northern flank of NATO is receiving increased attention as Soviet forces build up their strength in the White Sea and offshore Arctic waters. The Kola Peninsula and its principal base of Murmansk have become the center of concentration for Soviet air and naval forces over the last few years. Western intelligence estimates set current Soviet naval strength in the region at 180 submarines, 200 surface ships, and 440 planes. (The submarine figure includes more than half the total of Soviet missile-carrying undersea craft.) Norway is the only NATO country other than Turkey to share a frontier directly with the Soviet Union, and its defense posture is thus governed by particular prudence. There is only one road and one rail line connecting the northernmost county of Finnmark with the south, for example, and any defense against Soviet attack would have to be conducted from the sea. Norway makes the third biggest military effort in proportion to its population of all NATO members, but as there are only four million Norwegians, the size of the country's armed forces is necessarily limited. The Norwegian air force is equipped with 72 F-16 fighter-bombers with braking parachutes to allow them to land on the short runways typical of Norwegian airfields, but these same airfields, though relatively numerous, could never accommodate large arrivals of Allied aircraft in case of attack.

At the same time, the narrowness and mountainous nature of the Norwegian land corridor could be an advantage in preventing Soviet attackers from deploying their resources effectively. Meanwhile, pressure has mounted for Allied, chiefly United States, naval patrolling of northern Norwegian waters, and specifically for the use of carrier battle groups. The feeling is that the Soviets are being allowed too much freedom, especially in terms of their submarines, to maneuver at will in a commanding strategic region.

BRUSSELS

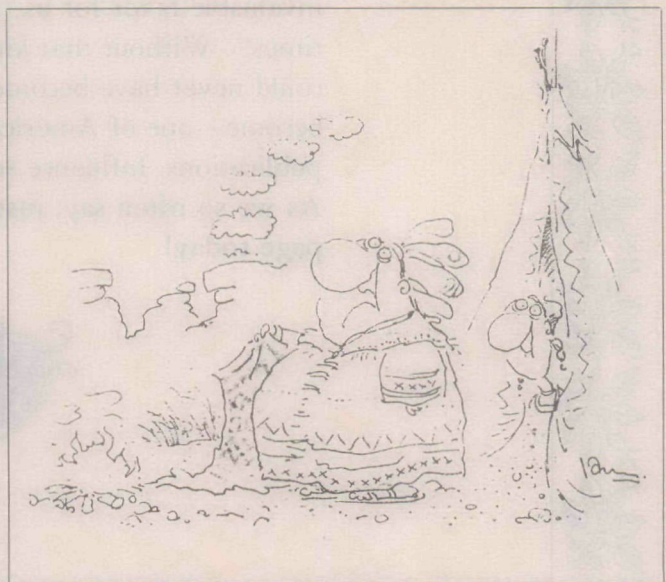
China Trade

China's trade with Western Europe continues to accelerate rapidly, as a recent economic agreement demonstrates. The new five-year pact goes far beyond previous accords and breaks new ground in several fields, notably managerial and industrial training programs. Western Europe's exports to China doubled between 1980 and 1984, going from \$1.25 billion worth of goods and services a year to \$2.15 billion. On the Chinese side, exports to Europe increased in the same period to almost \$2 billion, of which textiles and clothing accounted for 35 per cent. Other areas covered are biotechnology and information technology as well as the more usual ones of agriculture, transport, and mining.

LONDON

Brideshead Bernini

A priceless portrait bust by the Italian sculptor Gianlorenzo Bernini is being offered for sale by the owners of Castle Howard in Yorkshire in an attempt to raise money to save the stately home. Castle Howard was the setting of the television series based on Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. The owners are the four sons of Lord Howard of Henderskelfe, who died last year. They need £3 million (nearly \$4 million) to maintain the house and preserve the remaining collections while paying inheritance taxes, which means they would have to sell the statue for £4 million. While this is a high price to expect, the market for such rare objects can never be predicted, and sculpture such as this portrait of the seventeenth-century Cardinal del Pozzo rarely appears for sale. Another Italian masterpiece, the painting of the *Adoration of the Magi* by Mantegna, recently sold for more than £8 million.



"I keep getting his bloody answering machine."

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